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Connecting communities for a stronger future

As part of our plan for a stronger economy, the Coalition Government has today outlined an extensive investment in the Communications and Arts sectors through the 2022-23 Budget, with over \$5.6 billion to benefit industry, local organisations, communities and families Australia-wide.

These investments will create more jobs, ensure families across Australia enjoy the benefits of improved connectivity, boost the ability of our regions to respond to natural disasters and emergencies, and support businesses and arts organisations seeking to break into new markets.

The Government's 2022-23 Federal Budget investments in communications and the arts include:

- \$1.3 billion in funding to enhance regional telecommunications;
- \$4.3 billion in committed and growing funding for the ABC and SBS;
- Establishment of a Cell Broadcast National Messaging System (CBNMS) to deliver near real time warning messages to mobile phones, to inform the public of emergency and disaster events;
- \$5.7 million to deliver Australian television content to broadcasters in the Pacific;
- \$31.6 million toward Online Safety initiatives and to support the work of the eSafety Commissioner; and
- \$20 million for the final round of the Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) Fund.

Communications

As a key pillar of the Government's economic plan, we're continuing to position Australia as a top ten data and digital economy by 2030 by committing \$1.3 billion in the 2022-23 Federal Budget for improved communications infrastructure and connectivity in our regional, rural, remote and peri-urban communities.

Connecting Regional Australia Initiative

The Government will deliver a new \$811.8 million Connecting Regional Australia Initiative to expand mobile coverage and improve connectivity, resilience and affordability in regional, rural and peri-urban Australia. This initiative builds on existing programs including the Mobile Black Spot

Program and the Regional Connectivity Program.

This initiative will expand regional mobile coverage and address blackspots on up to 8,000 km of roads and adjacent households, businesses and tourist hotspots, deliver targeted upgrades to digital connectivity for communities, improve resilience against natural disasters, support affordability for families and businesses, and increase indigenous connectivity.

NBN Fixed Wireless Upgrade and enhancements to Sky Muster Satellite Services

The Coalition Government is investing in our regional, rural, remote and peri-urban communities to deliver more, higher speed broadband to around one million premises on NBN Co's fixed wireless and satellite networks. The Government is allocating \$480 million in grant funding towards a \$750 million upgrade of the entire NBN fixed wireless network by the end of 2024, with the balance to be funded by NBN Co.

The upgrade will extend the NBN fixed wireless footprint coverage by up to 50 per cent, enabling 120,000 additional premises to access fixed wireless services instead of Sky Muster satellite services. Through enhancements to existing capabilities, all three quarters of a million premises within the expanded fixed wireless footprint will receive much higher speeds, including during the network busy hour. These upgrades will also provide additional data allowances and extended off-peak periods for those on Sky Muster satellite services.

2021 Regional Telecommunications Review

The 2021 Regional Telecommunications Review is the fifth in a series of statutory independent reviews conducted every three years to assess the adequacy of telecommunications services in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia.

The Government's response to the Review, including the \$1.3 billion of initiatives outlined above, combined with expected co-investments by industry and state and territory governments, is anticipated to deliver over \$2 billion in total investment in telecommunications infrastructure in regional, rural and remote Australia.

Cell Broadcast National Messaging System (CBNMS)

The 2022-23 Federal Budget will provide funding for the establishment of a Cell Broadcast National Messaging System (CBNMS). This system will deliver warning messages to mobile phones, locally, regionally and nationally, in near real time. This will provide the Commonwealth with the ability to more rapidly inform the public of emergency and disaster events, such as flash flooding or terrorist threats, and will support local emergency services in responding to emergencies or disasters.

Funding for the National Broadcasters

The Government has locked in committed and growing funding of \$4.3 billion for the ABC and SBS over the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2025. The funding will allow the ABC and SBS to continue to provide innovative, comprehensive and high quality television, radio and digital media services to all Australians.

This funding is an increase for our national broadcasters compared to both the 2016-19 and 2019-22 funding periods. This funding commitment is designed to provide certainty for both broadcasters and well in advance of the next funding period, to assist the ABC and SBS to develop their forward plans.

Amplifying Australia's Voice in the Pacific

The Government will provide an additional \$5.7 million in the 2022-23 financial year to Free TV Australia to continue to deliver Australian television content to broadcasters in the Pacific. This funding builds on the \$17.1 million that has been provided over the three years to 2021-22 to deliver more than 1,000 hours of Australian television content each year to broadcasters in the Pacific.

Part of the Pacific Step-up, the program operates in nine participating Pacific nations, making a range of Australian commercial television content available for free-to-air broadcasting locally. This extends to Australian lifestyle programs, news, current affairs, drama, entertainment, children's and sports.

Online Safety

The Government will invest \$31.6 million over the next five years towards online safety initiatives as part of the Government's commitment to the new *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-23*. This includes \$27.1 million for the eSafety Commissioner to continue and expand its vital work, with \$16.6 million for eSafety to support victim-survivors of technology-facilitated abuse.

This investment complements Australia's online safety framework, which is underpinned by the *Online Safety Act 2021*, implemented in January 2022. The Act provides the eSafety Commissioner with even stronger powers to keep Australians safe online. This includes a world first cyber-abuse take-down scheme to protect adults, along with a strengthened cyber-bullying scheme to protect children.

Creative and Cultural Sector

To support the resurgence of Australia's creative and cultural sector, the Government is investing over \$1 billion in the sector in 2021-22.

Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) Fund

The Government will provide an additional \$20 million for the final round of the Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) Fund to support the continued recovery of the arts and entertainment sector from COVID-19, including in regional, rural and remote areas.

The RISE Fund has provided \$200 million towards 541 projects to date, supporting more than 213,000 job opportunities, and expanding cultural and creative experiences for audiences across Australia. RISE funded projects are occurring in 4,693 locations across Australia with over half in regional and remote locations.

A strong record

The \$5.6 billion of funding in the 2022-23 Budget builds on the Government's record of significant achievements in communications and the arts.

After six years of Labor, just 51,000 premises were connected to the fixed-line NBN. Today there are more than 8.4 million premises connected to the NBN. The Government's Mobile Black Spot Program is delivering over 1,270 mobile base stations across Australia. By contrast, Labor has never delivered a single mobile tower in rural and regional Australia.

The Coalition Government has led the world in online safety policy investing \$269.7 million in keeping Australians safe online including the creation of the world's first dedicated online safety regulator. Since establishment, the eSafety Commissioner has helped 3,800 children and their families in relation to distressing cyberbullying and conducted investigations into over 79,500 complaints about illegal online content such as child sexual abuse material.

In the cultural and creative sector, the investment by the Morrison Government has been unprecedented, with more than \$10 billion in wages and cash-flow support flowing into the sector during COVID-19. This investment was supplemented by targeted funding, including the Creative Economy COVID-19 Support Package which now stands at \$500 million.

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